

*Studies*  
IN THE  
DEITY *of* CHRIST

•  
What Is Meant By It

AN EDITORIAL EPISODE  
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TIMES

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Why Reason Requires It

BY ROBERT E. SPEER

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Obstacles to Believing It

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THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS

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WITH TESTIMONY FROM BIBLE SCHOLARS OF VARIED POINTS  
OF VIEW



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## What is Meant by the Deity of Christ

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CHRISTIANS will not be prepared to weather the increasing storm of wide-spread denial of the Bible and of the Christian Faith unless they understand with mind and with heart what is meant by "the deity of Christ." Many do not understand how vitally important are the controversies to-day over this question, and how deeply significant the truths are for our own Christian lives. Peter tells us that angels desire to look into the mystery regarding the sufferings and the glory of our Lord Jesus, and then says to us Christians that we should gird up the loins of our mind, while setting our hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord himself knew the truth that he must leave with his followers,—the question above all questions that would divide men. After he had lived intimately with his disciples, after they had heard his teaching and watched his miracles, when he was about to reveal his coming passion and resurrection, and just before he was revealed in his glory to three of the disciples on the Transfiguration Mount, at this time of crisis he asked the disciples that supremely important question, in its twofold aspect: "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" And then, "But who say ye that I am?" And it was the question that Jesus asked his enemies also. After he had answered all the questions of the scribes and Pharisees, and the time came when "they durst not any more ask him any questions," it was then that

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*An Editorial from The Sunday School Times.*

he asked them his one question: "What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?"

When Peter, speaking for the disciples and therefore for the Christian church of all time, gave his Lord the answer that the Father in heaven revealed to him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord instantly let them know that upon this rock, His own Deity, his Church was to be built.

Well has the great Adversary of Christ in the contest for the world understood the rock on which the Church is built. It is not surprising, then, that in these last days the assaults of the enemies of God—unconscious enemies, many of them, but all guided by an Enemy who is definitely conscious of what he wishes to do—should be hurled against this rock, the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The modern Higher Criticism, which from its beginning has centered about the Old Testament, as Dr. James Orr constantly emphasized "tends again to concentrate itself in the New Testament, and supremely about the Central Figure there—Christ Himself. This result was inevitable." Many scholars have pointed out this oncoming attack against the New Testament by the same guns that have sought to shatter the Old. Thus the prophecy of our Lord is confirmed, that the person of Christ is the question of all questions that have to do with the Bible and with life.

Is there a distinction between "the deity of Christ" and "the divinity of Christ"? A generation ago, and even more recently, the discussion concerning our Lord's Person centered about the term, "the divinity of Christ." And many who take the Bible view of Christ still speak of the divinity of Christ, and mean by it just what is meant by His deity. The word deity comes from the Latin word, "Deus," meaning God, the word divinity from the Latin word meaning "divine." The Romans frequently used these words interchangeably in referring to their heathen divinities, and in their root meaning they are closely connected. Now to-day, many who call themselves Christians are ready to affirm that they believe in the divinity of Christ, but not his deity; and by this they mean that Jesus was divine as all men



are divine, His divinity not being essentially different from that of other men, though he was closest to God of all men. Because of this widespread acceptance of "the divinity of Christ" on the part of those who deny that his relation to God was essentially different from that of all other men, the expression "deity of Christ" came into current use. However, it is not the words that are used, but the meaning that is given to the words that is important. And to-day we have those avowing their belief even in the deity of Christ who do not take the Bible view of his Person.

According to the full Bible revelation, the deity of Christ means the Godhood of Jesus, that the historical Jesus revealed in the four Gospels was the Messiah or the Christ promised in the Old Testament, and that this Jesus *is Jehovah-God*, one with the Father, who has all the qualities and prerogatives and powers of the one and only God. All of this is involved in the term "the deity of Christ."

There is a strong prejudice in our day against "theological" discussions, and some tell us that this question of the deity of Christ is "theological," and has caused endless controversy which is not really important for the plain Christian. But to understand the deity of Christ does not mean that a Christian need understand all the theological statements that have been made regarding it. The reason for the long controversies is that man cannot explain by reasoning *how* Jesus is God, or *why* he is God, or how there can be Three Persons in the Godhead. But by faith we can believe the fact that Jesus *is* God. If by faith we believe that he is, though we cannot explain how or why, we mean that he can do what God can do; he can forgive sins, regenerate us, cleanse us from sin, answer our prayers, work miracles for us, raise us from the dead, unite us with God eternally. What has the world to say to this conception? What do Christian teachers say? What does our life say?

Modern "science," modern literature, modern philosophy, utterly reject the deity of Christ. If the miracle of the deity of Christ were accepted, it would overturn all the fundamental conceptions of

modern thinkers, as represented in our great university centers of learning. This does not mean that our Faith conflicts with scientific fact, but there is an irreconcilable conflict with the prevailing current *theories* in science, art, and philosophy. These represent the "wisdom of men" that is to be brought to nought by "the foolishness of God." What is this foolishness? God on the Cross, crucified by men. The thought is revolting to those who do not believe; but is the power of God unto salvation to all who do believe.

Still more important for us Christians is the denial of the deity of Christ by thinkers within the Christian fold.

Mr. Pace, in his cartoon entitled "Judas," in The Sunday School Times of May 19, quoted an extract from the sermon of a minister in a supposedly evangelical church. Referring to the Bible view of Christ, which he says for nineteen centuries has given Him a place of "gloomy grandeur," the minister continues: "At last the brave have come, have questioned and explored, and we know that he was a man even as Lincoln, even as you and I. That his soul was divine, as our souls are potentially. Capricious Gods and miracles flee before the oncoming modern man."

FALSE

A physician reader of The Sunday School Times some months ago sent to the Editor a copy of a church bulletin which contained this quotation from a well-known college president: "The first glad message of Christianity is that in Jesus Christ there is completely revealed to us the character of God. . . . No one thinks that He was the 'absolute,' whatever that may mean; that he was omniscient, or omnipresent, or omnipotent. So far as I know, no first-rate theologian in the Christian church has ever identified Jesus Christ with Deity." The Times reader says, "I should like an explanation, since I supposed that the giants of Christianity did identify Jesus with deity."

FALSE

A leader of one branch of the Society of Friends, writing of "a reasonable faith," after reminding his readers that the religious Society of Friends has no written creed and that no member is authorized to state its beliefs in a sense that makes the Society



responsible, quotes the following statement in the Book of Discipline of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends: "It is the belief of the religious Society of Friends that God manifested himself in Jesus Christ, and that the spirit that was in Jesus is revealed in the human soul, and constitutes the Rock on which the Church is founded." He goes on to explain: "the same spirit that enabled Jesus to resist temptation is the possession of every human being, for there is a Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Then referring to the doctrine of the Trinity and other beliefs, he continues: "From these polytheistic theories it is a relief to turn to the idea of one true God that runs through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Let us stand firm in the faith of Jesus Christ as stated by himself, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, *not any other*. We are on sure ground here, for to worship the one true God is religion, the other is theology. It is reasonable to take a stand here; we 'can no other.'"

NOTE  
HOW  
CLOSE  
BUT YET  
SO FAR

These quotations are written by earnest men in earnest protest against the deity of Christ—the Godhood of Jesus. With Thomas,—not doubting Thomas but believing Thomas,—we bow before Jesus, who is Jehovah-God of the Old Testament, and cry out with full hearts, "My Lord, and my God."

These expressions of unbelief on the deity of Christ could be multiplied a thousandfold without going outside the ranks of Christian ministers of supposedly evangelical churches. The modern spirit of science and art and philosophy is leavening with evil the visible Church, and the wide-spread denial of the deity of our Lord here is a far more serious matter than in the world that does not profess Christ. Unitarianism is not so dangerous when it organizes and honestly calls itself by that name. The Unitarianism that is dangerous to-day is that which is leavening the pulpit and the pews of evangelical denominations that call themselves Christian.

The deity of Christ makes our faith an absolute

and final faith. It makes necessary all the other great truths of our faith. It is not an accident that those who waver on the deity of Christ, in the full meaning of that term, also give up other beliefs. The deity of Christ makes necessary the Virgin Birth of Christ. It makes necessary the acceptance of the Old Testament as the Word of God; and those who have sought to destroy the revelation of God in the Old Testament have not fully understood the meaning of Christ's deity.

And let it be well understood that the man who rejects the deity of Christ rejects God. It is a mistake to suppose that the Jews, or any others who to-day profess to worship the God of the Old Testament but deny Jesus, are really worshipping God. If Jesus is the Jehovah-God of the Old Testament, then the Jews have rejected Him, and no man can come to the Father except through Christ. Do we begin to see something of the absoluteness of this Rock of the Christian faith, something of its supreme importance to men? It is either this or to be "without God and without hope in the world."

There is another form of unbelief in the deity of Christ that is saddest of all, and doubtless pains our Lord more than the blatant and blasphemous unbelief of those who openly reject the truth as to our Lord's Person. It is the wide-spread infidelity among even those *who profess to accept Christ at his full Bible measure*. One of the anti-Christian writers of our day said a true thing when he wrote: "What a man believes may be ascertained, not from his creed, but from the assumptions upon which he habitually acts." Do we habitually act on the assumption that Jesus is God, or is it only our *creed* that believes in the deity of Christ? How much do we read the things that Jesus has said? How much do we read the Bible, the Book that he said testified of him, the Book which is the written revelation of God as He is the living revelation of God? How much are we hated by the world that rejects the deity of Christ? How much do we find our joys, not in the things of that world, but in the things of the heavenly places where Christ is, and where all those who believe from their heart in his deity are seated with him?

These questions are a test of the reality of our belief in his deity, and of all that that involves. If there is anything lacking in our belief, and therefore in our Christian experience, let us remember that, because Jesus *is* God, *he* can do the thing that is absolutely necessary before we can receive this Truth and make it dynamic in our lives. He can give us Himself who is the Truth. "This is the true God, and eternal life."

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**Professor James Stalker, M.A., D.D., Church  
History, United Free Church College, Aber-  
deen, Scotland.**

The United Free Church of Scotland, to which I belong, is not, I believe, looked upon as deficient in scholarship; and I happen to have an unusually wide and intimate acquaintance with its ministers and professors, numbering in all nearly two thousand; but I do not know a single one amongst them who does not believe and teach the doctrine in question. For this many reasons might be assigned; but, in my opinion, the chief one is that our men have a thorough knowledge of what is taught in Scripture on the subject, and especially in the words of our Lord himself.

**Professor George L. Robinson, M.A., Ph.D.,  
Old Testament Literature and Exegesis, Mc-  
Cormick Theological Seminary, Chicago.**

By the "deity" of Christ, I understand the super-human, Godlike character of Jesus, which distinguishes him as unique, and different from every other person who ever lived. By his "divinity," I fear some in these days mean that he was no more divine than any other good man, except possibly to a greater degree. With such a view I have absolutely no sympathy whatever. To me Jesus was the predicted "God with us" and "Mighty God" of Isaiah 7: 14; 9: 6, nothing less. After every review of his life and teachings, I lay down the Gospels—the Synoptists as well as John—ready to exclaim with Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John 20: 28).

# Why Reason Requires the Deity of Christ

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BY ROBERT E. SPEER

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THE question of the deity of Christ is the question of the truth or falsehood of Christianity. Either Jesus was divine, God and man in one historic personality, or he was merely a man. The thought of other days may have been able to conceive of a third possibility, the character of a demi-God, less than God and more than man. But we can entertain no such conception. We have but the two choices. One of these choices carries with it the affirmation of the truth of Christianity. The other involves its denial. For Christianity as understood by its first interpreters rested upon one rock, faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and life from God in Him. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (1 John 5: 10-12).

Christianity was not and is not the teaching or the example or the spirit of Jesus. It was the gift by a supernatural Person of the life of God in himself to man. The essential difference of the two

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views was brought out some years ago by two answers to the same question, namely, "What is the greatest gift Jesus gave to the world?" To this ex-Secretary of the Navy Long replied, "The Sermon on the Mount." Governor Guild, of Massachusetts, answered, "Himself."

### **Who Could Have Invented Jesus?**

The faith of the Christian Church in the deity of Christ rests on a wide range of evidence. And the Church is not disturbed in its confidence by any unbelief, any more than a man who saw the sunlight would be troubled by the scepticism of blind men. The deity of Christ is not a problem for the church. But it is a problem for unbelief. For Jesus Christ is a fact of history, and the faith in his deity is a fact in human thought, and these facts must be accounted for by men. The fact of faith may be brushed aside as delusion provided the unbeliever is sure enough of himself to dismiss the long list of the wise and great who have believed. But the fact of history remains; and Jesus is there as a person and a power to be accounted for and given a value to. Was he what the records represent and what he himself claimed? To what is his influence and the tenacity of his memory due? Can the ordinary categories of human religious genius contain him? "It is no use," says John Stuart Mill, "to say that Christ as exhibited in the Gospels is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the traditions of his followers." It is no use because, as Mill goes on to ask, who among his disciples, and we may boldly add, who among all unbelievers, was "capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus or of imagining the life and character recorded in the Gospels"? We cannot ignore the place Jesus has filled in the history of the world, or that he fills in it to-day. The question is, how is all this to be estimated? Is the problem of Jesus rationally and sufficiently answered by calling him only a man, as great and good as you please, but only a man?

It is right and necessary that the problem should be faced squarely and on reasonable grounds by every man. The believer in Christ's deity can only

believe on grounds of reason, and he must be prepared to state the basis of his conviction in rational terms. Those by whom Jesus has not been accepted as the incarnate God must face the historical and moral issues which are involved, and either meet them on the ground of their estimate of Jesus' character or be confronted with the moral obligation to change their personal attitude toward him.

1. The first and most obvious element of the problem of Jesus when we look at him sincerely is his **CHARACTER**. No critical questions as to the Gospels dissipate this problem of the ethical personality of our Lord. The clear picture of the moral manhood of Jesus must be accounted for. What we see when we look at him is a character of complete sincerity, simple, humble, unselfish, dignified, loving, forgiving, steadfast, considerate yet absolutely independent.

The theory may be at once dismissed that this picture of Jesus is the result of our idealization of his actual historic character. The contrary fact is true, namely, that our ideals have their origin in the Gospel picture of his character. The problem that is at once raised is this: Was this character merely human? Bushnell holds that it was not, in his classic chapter entitled, "The Character of Jesus Forbids His Possible Classification Among Men." If we are not prepared to acknowledge this, if on the other hand we hold Jesus to have been a purely human phenomenon, then a penetrating moral responsibility confronts us. We are bound to repeat Jesus' moral qualities. If they are purely human we cannot excuse ourselves. This achievement lays a stringent compulsion on us. For character is not an irresponsible endowment. It is a responsible attainment. And the progress of twenty centuries and the resources and advantages of our life suggest our surpassing the accomplishments of an unlettered Galilean peasant. If Jesus was only a man, *why am I not a better man?*

2. A second element of the problem of Jesus is his **TEACHING**. Those who deny his deity often take admiring delight in calling him Teacher. He is to them the Great Teacher. But can he be that without being more than that? Consider the originality of his teaching. "I cannot discover in these essential



characteristics of the Christian religion any filiation, any human origin," says Guizot. And Lecky declares: "Nothing can, as I conceive, be more erroneous or superficial than the reasonings of those who maintain that the moral element in Christianity has in it nothing distinctive or peculiar. It is quite certain that the Christian type differs not only in degree, but in kind, from the pagan one."

From whom could Jesus have learned his doctrine or borrowed his project? Not from foreigners. His isolation as a young man is a pledge of this. Not from Jews. His contemporaries regarded his teaching as revolutionary. Schleiermacher points out that "of all the sects in vogue, none ever claimed Jesus as representing it; none branded him with the reproach of apostasy from its tenets." Moreover, there was no one from whom Jesus could have plagiarized his project. "The idea of changing the moral aspect of the whole earth, of recovering nations to the pure and inward worship of the one God, and to a spirit of divine and fraternal love, was one of which we find not a trace in philosopher and legislator before him," says Channing.

### **Who But God Could Have so Taught?**

Consider the audacity of his teachings. As Liddon says:

"Here is, as it seems, a Galilean peasant, surrounded by a few followers taken like Himself from the lowest orders of society; yet He deliberately proposes to rule all human thought, to make himself the center of all human affections, to be the Law-giver of humanity, and the Object of man's adoration. He founds a spiritual society, the thought and heart and activity of which are to converge upon His Person, and He tells His followers that this society which He is forming is the real explanation of the highest visions of seers and prophets, that it will embrace all races and extend throughout all time. He places Himself before the world as the true goal of its expectations, and He points to His proposed work as the one hope for its future. There was to be a universal religion, and He would found it."

As a teacher the conception of Jesus as more than man is necessary to meet the very terms of the problem. Great genius would suffice to account for the inimitable form of his teaching. No one has ever been able to duplicate one of his parables, but that would not set him off in any qualitative way from man. It is the substance and spirit of his teaching which are not explicable on any humanistic hypothesis. His revelation of values gives him the value of God.

And the giver of such a divine donation must himself have been a Divine Knower and Possessor. What the fourth Gospel reports him to have said is the most rational explanation of his message, "I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things."

3. But the problem of Jesus presents a third and deeper difficulty to unbelief. All men admit that Jesus was a holy and humble man, that he wrought good among men, and lived a blameless life and died nobly. But how can this representation be reconciled with the facts that he openly proclaimed HIS OWN MORAL EXCELLENCE: that he put himself forward as a messenger from God in such a sense that the record alleges that the Jews declared that he identified himself with God, made himself God's equal and called himself God's own Son; that he asked God's forgiveness in behalf of others but never in his own behalf; that he asserted his own sinlessness and maintained a pious life without penitence; that he made himself the center and object of faith and loyalty to men? These facts cannot all be excluded from the record without excluding the fact of Christ. They are part of the problem. Can a humanitarian solution cover these facts?

"Piety without one dash of repentance, one ingenuous confession of wrong, one tear, one look of contrition, one request to heaven for pardon—let any one of mankind try this kind of piety," says Bushnell, "and see how long it will be ere his righteousness will prove itself to be the most impudent conceit! how long before his passions, sobered by no contrition, his pride, kept down by no repentance, will tempt him into absurdities that will turn his pretences to mockery!"

And how could a humble man have made such claims as these for himself? Or how could a self-deceived man have lived so normal and rich and fruitful a life? We cannot escape from the harsh dilemma, that if Jesus' claims were not true then he was either a fanatic or a hypocrite. In the former case he was self-deceived, with inferior moral discernment, and though a sinner was ignorant of the fact. But such a supposition is contradicted utterly by his character, by its perfect balance, by the testimony of his sinlessness and holiness of those who knew him and followed him. If we accept the other alternative, then we must believe that he was conscious of transgressing the divine law constantly and wretchedly, and yet expressly denied it. "But who is there," asks Ullmann, "that would be ready to undertake the defense of such a position, and to maintain that he, who in all the circumstances of his life acted from the purest conscientiousness and who at last died for the truth upon the cross, was after all nothing but an abject hypocrite? How could it be that he, of whom even the least susceptible must confess that there breathed around him an atmosphere of purity and faith, should have fallen into an antagonism with himself so deep and so deadly?" It simply cannot have been. Such a solution of the problem of the innocent self-consciousness of Jesus as the Son of the Father and the revealer of God lays more of a strain on the reason than is required by faith in his deity.

4. We have to account also in our solution of the problem of Jesus for the extent and quality of HIS INFLUENCE IN HISTORY AND LIFE. How has it come about that the whole civilized world and a good part of the non-Christian world dates its chronology from the birth of Jesus? This is not a merely accidental and arbitrary arrangement. As a matter of indisputable fact Jesus stands at the center of human history. All that went before leads up to him and all that came after flows out from him. He and his influence hold the center in human thought. That thought may accept or reject him, but it finds its classification in a scheme of which he is the determining principle. He and his ideas and the religion which worships him as God have been the deepest

influence in the life of the world and are so to-day. These are not hasty claims. Each one of them can be verified. The three short years of Jesus' life, says Lecky, have "done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists."

### Could Man Atone for Men?

"In all my study of the ancient times," said Johann von Muller, skeptical historian, "I have always felt the want of something, and it was not until I knew our Lord that all was clear to me; with Him there is nothing that I am not able to solve."

But the supreme work and service of Jesus Christ was his atonement for human sin and the gift of his power in the salvation of men. Did he do these things? Millions of men can testify that he did them for them. How could a mere man have done them? They were achievements which man could not do for himself. Only God could do them for man. Must not he who did them, and does them still, be God?

5. The early Christian Church believed also that while Jesus had died like other men he had not died like other men. He had **RISEN FROM THE DEAD**. And this unique end had confirmed their faith in his unique character. Indeed, it was all that did confirm it. For their expectations and extraordinary conception of character-value in the case of Jesus had collapsed with his death. They confessed sorrowfully that they had cherished hopes regarding him which had broken down with his crucifixion. What re-created them and re-established their confidence? The cause must have been adequate to the effect. Christianity died with Christ. Then suddenly it arose again. How? Because Christ had risen. This was the explanation of the first Christians. And it was the impregnable conviction of Paul. So sure of it was he that though he would still have had all the other arguments for the deity of Christ of which we have spoken he declared that there was nothing in it for him if the resurrection was not a fact. If Christ did not rise we have to account for the phenomenon of Paul's faith and influence, and for



the very existence of Christianity which had died with Christ. If he did rise the humanitarian solution of his Person collapses.

But the modern mind has one firm objection to such a summary style of argument. The resurrection would not be to it an evidence of the deity of Christ because there could not be a resurrection. Christ couldn't be divine because there cannot be any such thing as a God-man. But that is to beg the whole question, and to do it by shutting up the mind against what to the open and unprejudiced view is the most reasonable solution of the problem. And what right has any man or person to exclude such a solution? Virchow could not do so. Sir Alexander Simpson says he asked him, "the man who had made so many hundreds of operations, if he had any difficulty in believing in the Resurrection." "No," replied Virchow, "why should I?"

Why should he indeed, or any of us, when the matter can be tested simply and surely in our own lives? Whether the divine Christ is alive or not can be tried in any man's own experience. Let a man who needs to be saved from his sin, from lust, from drunkenness, from impurity, from selfishness, from cowardice, and to be made strong to do his duty, to be veracious in small things, to sacrifice himself for others, to love his enemies, to be pure and holy, commit himself to Socrates or Moses or Paul or Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus or Petrarch, or any other dead sage or hero and see what comes of it. But let him commit himself to Christ in the surrender of his soul on the hazard of the truth of Christ's offer and claim, and he will find, as millions are ready to testify, the presence and power of a *living* Saviour. The Christian Church has her historic and rational evidence for believing in the deity of Christ. It is the one reasonable and satisfying solution of a problem otherwise insoluble. But she does not rest on such evidence alone. "Try it for yourself," she says, "you can test the solution in your own life. Make experiment of his deity and see whether it is true or not. If you truly try him, you will find him to be truly God."

## Obstacles to Believing the Deity of Christ

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BY JOHN H. STRONG, D. D.

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**W**HY are men blind to Christ? What type of mind is it that fails to give Christ his glory? And what are the hindrances?

Many reasons may be given, and the reasons given may not be the real reasons. Unilluminated men do not understand themselves, their failures of action, their failures of knowledge. A man not a Christian told a clergyman that if once he could be persuaded that Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, all his difficulties would be swept away and he would become a Christian. A while later this clergyman preached on the resurrection of Lazarus, and the doubter professed himself to be fully satisfied. But he did not become a Christian. One difficulty had been removed, but another difficulty remained below consciousness, and that was the real difficulty preventing him from taking Christ as his Saviour.

A Christian worker observed in an evangelistic meeting a man evidently in distress of mind. Approaching him, he asked whether he was a Christian, and received this surprising answer: "I do not believe in hell, and I do not believe there is a devil." The other replied that those were matters aside from his question, but received a second time the same reply. "But," the Christian repeated, "that is not our first concern, is it? That is not the Gospel. We are nowhere told to believe in hell or believe in the devil and we shall be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." And he pictured to the man the love

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*From The Sunday School Times.*



and mercy of God as revealed in the face, the outstretched hands, the words and work of the Saviour. And the light came. It flashed on the man like a wonderful sunrise, and then and there he came into the full peace of salvation. As he left, the other man, prompted by curiosity, asked, "But what now about hell and the devil?" This answer came back:

"If there is not a hell, there ought to be for such a wretch as I have been; and as for a devil, it is a question whether there is a better explanation of the power of evil in the world than that hypothesis."

### The Real Obstacle Here

There was a man who gave reasons for not being a Christian which were not the reasons that operated. When the real reason was discovered, it was simply this: that *he had never really attended to and heeded the Saviour*. And even in the case of the other two dark facts, it was not inherent difficulties in them that kept them from being believed, for those difficulties were never removed, but a deeper obstacle which was only revealed when he had accepted Christ as his Saviour.

It may sound startling, but it is solemnly true, that the moment a man departs from God by unbelief or disobedience, his mind becomes undependable. And under these circumstances what importance attaches to the reasons he assigns for not accepting Christ's deity? They are not the real reasons. The real reasons he cannot fathom until he becomes an illuminated Christian.

How *do* men discern the deity of Christ? That is a more profitable question. And perhaps the true way may reveal the false ways, and the real hindrances may come to light which prevent men from recognizing and acknowledging the glorious nature of our Master.

Here a fact comes to light which we may well ponder,—namely, that the firmness and certitude with which Christ's deity is held stands in no relation to intellectual ability, or to the thoroughness and skill with which the material has been mastered upon which a belief in Christ's deity is ordinarily supposed to rest.

## What Her Words Meant

I recall in one of my first parishes a young woman whom I saw bowed in prayer with a group of little children gathered round her. It was at a time when I myself was passing through a period of questioning as to our Lord's deity, and I shall never so long as I live forget the immeasurable and heavenly assurance with which that young woman, leading the circle of children in prayer, uttered the words, "Lord Jesus." She was no theologian. She knew nothing of the lore of the schools. The formal argument upon which belief in Christ's divine nature is commonly reared had never been heard by her. Yet she knelt there profoundly assured, blessedly illuminated, her mind flooded with light from the glory of Christ and filled with a faith such as many a trained man would have given worlds to come into possession of.

It is said that Dr. John R. Mott came into an understanding of the deity of Christ while dealing with convicts in prisons. If that be true, what was there in the experience to produce the result? The experience hardly seems to contain the material out of which a formal argument for Christ's deity could be constructed. Is this faith, this belief, this persuasion, a "construction"? Is it not something very different?

Before me I see a beautiful house of marble, imposing in its proportions. A velvet carpet of green surrounds it, and an allee of ancient trees leads up to the door. Having never been within, I set myself to guess its interior. What furniture fills it? What decoration adorns it? I set myself to recall all the beautiful interiors I have seen, and the wonderful works of art which from the beginning men have used to adorn the palaces they have built; and bearing in mind the scale on which the house before me is built, and the costliness of its materials, I say, "I think inside this house will be found such and such furniture, and such a style of decoration." I have come to my conclusion. Is it at best more than a clever bit of guess-work? Suppose while I am reasoning thus the owner approaches and swings open the doors and ushers us in. I should then see and realize what I at first only imperfectly inferred and

dreamed. I should then *know*, because the thing itself had dawned on me. And no process of reasoning could ever deprive me of that knowledge, for no process of reasoning had conferred it.

The truth which the church so needs to discern is the truth clearly stated in the New Testament, and so often repeated in the experience of Christians, that the deity of Christ is a *revelation*. It is not the capstone of an argument, or a correct inference from a multitude of facts about our Lord which the mind perceives and judges, but a *revelation*, an immediate disclosure flashed by God's Spirit on a soul, just as Christ's glory was flashed on Saul as he rode breathing out threatenings and slaughter on the way from Jerusalem to Damascus.

Who ever came to an understanding of what Christ was by reasoning on data? Who, by any formal process of argument,—by saying, "He did this, he said that, therefore he must be divine"? Even where a logical process has taken place, something else has put the reality into the process that has made it an unshakable certainty and not a more or less likely hypothesis. The assurance which we come to have regarding Christ's higher being and nature partakes of the nature of intuition and vision. Processes may help, but at last *we see it*. The soul has eyes. That is the meaning of the crisis in Peter's life when, elicited by Jesus' question, the truth burst on Peter's mind at Cæsarea Philippi, and two confessions followed,—Peter's, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and Christ's, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

That is the way we come to know Christ's deity. Inferring it from Christ's words, deeds, character, influence in the world, or from the convictions and teachings of his apostles concerning him, is very like trying to make up my mind from the exterior of that house and from my knowledge of other houses as to what it was probably like within. I need to be led by the hand by the Holy Spirit into the inner secret of Christ, and begin to live in Christ and have Christ live in me, before I really know Him. Jesus said to his disciples, as John reports in his four-

teenth chapter: "Can't you *see* the Father in me? If you cannot, then take my words and my works and begin to argue from them. That is better than nothing. But the time is coming when you will not have to do that. The time is coming when you will *know* that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. For I am going to manifest myself to you."

A Christian was walking on a hillside, one evening in the moonlight, when suddenly Christ took on the aspect of a glorious being with whom he was in fellowship. He saw no glory. He only became aware in a way unintelligible to himself, and entirely impossible of description, of Christ's glorious reality. His mind had for years dwelt on Christ's perfections. He had again and again, as he saw Christ in the Gospel story in environments calling for wisdom, compassion, poise, nobility, exclaimed as the disciples did after the storm, "What manner of man is this?" A secret lay there,—Christ's divinity, or deity, he well knew. He thought he knew Christ's deity; *but he never really knew it until that night when it was revealed.*

"No man can say, Jesus is Lord, save by the Holy Spirit." How clear it is, then, that if the deity of Christ is a revelation, the reason why many do not discern Christ's deity is that something hinders the revelation.

"Yet a little while and the world beholdeth me no more," Jesus told his disciples, "but ye behold me; because I live, ye shall live also." There is a great difference between "the world" and the disciple. Not intellectual mainly, but moral and spiritual reasons, lie back of this beholding and not beholding. We know that sin hides God's face; and for sin there must be atonement and the purification of the sinner. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

### Some "Stock" Objections

We know also that disobedience may destroy a knowledge of God already possessed. A young man possesses a radiant knowledge of Christ as his Master and companion. He is called to the missionary field. He refuses the call. The knowledge



fades. Such tragedies put solemnity into the words of the Lord to his disciples, "He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and *will manifest myself unto him.*"

Such, then, are the reasons why some discern and acknowledge the deity of Christ and some do not. To some, God is able to make the revelation; and to others he is not. What a flood of light these simple facts throw on the reasons which men themselves assign for not accepting our Lord's deity. Here are a few gathered from many:

1. "I do not accept the deity of Christ because it is connected with the outgrown dogma of the church's authority,—a relic of the days when the church, prodded by Greek influence, developed philosophically its conception of Christ to defend itself against attack and enhance its authority in the world."

2. "I do not accept the deity of Christ because the doctrine is unreasonable, a denial of philosophical simplicity, as is too plainly revealed in the doctrine of the Trinity to which it logically leads."

3. "I do not believe in the deity of Christ because all such inquiries lead away into metaphysical speculation which distracts from the practical and puts a false intellectual emphasis upon the religious life."

4. "I do not believe in the deity of Christ because the divine is the antithesis of the human; and since the Christ history knows lived as human, what is called his deity can only be the unique reach of the human which he was, and not the divine which is incompatible with what he was."

How pitiful these objections to Christ's deity appear in the light of the real reason why men do not discern Christ's glory! How men need a revelation! There came a young woman to me toward the close of a summer conference, all at sea, and in deep distress, because she possessed no religious certitude whatever. She did not even believe that Jesus Christ had been a historical person. *That* she might have learned from Tacitus, Suetonius, or Pliny, if not

from the Bible; but relentless doubt had stripped even that poor knowledge from her.

Said I, "What you need is a revelation, is it not?"

"I believe I do," she answered.

Then we turned to the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel, the twenty-first verse, and read, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, *and will manifest myself unto him.*"

"Go and fulfil that condition," I said, "and Christ will fulfil his promise."

Did our all-gracious Lord ever fail? What is his attitude toward the inquirer? Let his words speak once again: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

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**Professor Robert W. Rogers, M.A., Ph.D.,  
D.D., LL.D., F.R.G.S., Hebrew and Old Testa-  
ment Exegesis, Drew Theological Seminary,  
Madison, New Jersey.**

Nothing has happened amid the learning and sifting of recent years to diminish in the least degree my belief in the deity of our Lord. No other view of his Person explains what he has been to others and what he is to me. I have no fear that his supreme Authority can be diminished, and I go steadily forward, desiring above all else in life to know him by that same inner experience whereby his saints in all ages have been best assured concerning him.

**Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., Editor  
of The British Weekly, The Bookman, The  
Expositor, London, England; Editor of the  
Expositor's Greek Testament, etc.**

I fully believe in the deity of Christ as one of the Three Persons in the unity of the eternal and adorable Trinity.



# What God Says About the Deity of Christ

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## A FEW OF THE MANY DECLARATIONS IN GOD'S OWN WORD AS TO WHO JESUS IS

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For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isa. 9: 6).

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. And . . . an angel of the Lord appeared unto him [Joseph] in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,

And they shall call his name Immanuel;

which is, being interpreted, God with us. And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth a son: and he called his name JESUS (Matt. 1: 18-25).

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straight-

way from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (3: 16, 17).

He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven (16: 15, 16).

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said (26: 63, 64).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1: 1, 2, 14, 18).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life (3: 16).

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work. For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God. Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, . . . as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honor-

eth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself (5: 17-23, 25, 26).

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am (8: 58; Exod. 3: 13-15).

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee (9: 35-37).

The Father is in me, and I in the Father (10: 38).

And he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me (12: 45).

If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father (14: 7-9).

These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, . . . Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (17: 1, 5).

Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed (20: 28, 29).

Whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. 9: 5).

Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted

not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped (Phil. 2: 5, 6).

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily (Col. 2: 9).

God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, . . . who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, . . . For unto which of the angels said he at any time,

Thou art my Son, . . .  
but of the Son he saith,

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever (Heb. 1: 1-8).

SEVERAL years ago an assertion was publicly made in one of our northwestern states, in the presence of university and professional men, to the effect that the eminent Biblical critics of our day do not accept the deity of Christ, as distinguished from his divinity. The Sunday School Times was appealed to as to the correctness of this assertion.

In response, the Editor asked a large number of such scholars, on both sides of the Atlantic, to express their personal belief in this matter. The great majority declared themselves unequivocally as believing in the deity of Christ. Their replies were published in The Sunday School Times; and a few of these are given herewith, together with the statements on pages 9 and 24 of this pamphlet.

Sir William M. Ramsay, D.D., D.C.L., LL.D.,  
Litt.D., Aberdeen University.

The distinction of "divinity" from "deity" as applied to Jesus is new to me in that form; but I suppose it is another way of expressing the idea that Jesus was purely man, who by his perfection of character attained to absolute freedom from the faults of men, and, so to say, became like unto God. I regard this theory as a mere juggling with words, and essentially irrational. To put an idea in words does not imply the possibility or reality of that idea. This idea has assumed many varying expressions in words, and is very old. No sooner is its irrationality in one form of words recognized and demonstrated than it finds a new dress, and is able for a time to deceive people who are not careful to scrutinize the real meaning of the words they use, and who in trying to avoid the apparent difficulty of the superhuman, or "miraculous," element in the Gospels, run into the real self-contradictoriness of this old-fashioned theory. I can see no rational explanation of the world's history or of the moral life of man, alike in the wide view over all history and in the narrow view of the individual man's life, except in the deity of Jesus Christ.



**Professor C. A. Briggs, D.D., D.Litt., Union  
Theological Seminary, New York City.**

Any one who says that "the eminent biblical critics of our day do not accept the deity of Christ as distinguished from his divinity" does not know what he is talking about. One may object to the deity of Christ on philosophical or scientific grounds, but not on the grounds of biblical criticism, which in all its departments, lower, higher, historical, and theological, verifies the deity of Christ. It is necessary to deny the New Testament that criticism gives us, if you wish to deny the deity of Christ.

**Professor W. H. Griffith Thomas, D.D., Old  
Testament Literature and Exegesis, Wycliffe  
College, Toronto, Canada.**

With all my heart I believe in the deity as distinct from the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has fallen to my lot during the last few years to read pretty widely and fully on this subject, and to face as far as possible whatever has been written against the Christian position, as I regard it. I can only say that I am more convinced than ever that belief in our Lord's deity is at once true to the plain teaching of the New Testament, to the existence, growth, and continuance of the Christian Church, and to the deepest and most fundamental needs of the human soul. Not least of all, it is the only position in which any "gospel" or good news for the world can be found. Let any one preach either at home or abroad the divinity and not the deity of Jesus Christ, and he will soon find the truth of the statement attributed to a poor woman who heard such a message: "Your rope isn't long enough for the likes of us."

**President Augustus H. Strong, D.D., LL.D.,  
Professor of Systematic Theology, Rochester  
Theological Seminary.**

I most devoutly believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that in a sense quite distinguishable from his mere divinity. I understand the Fourth Gospel to teach expressly that he was in the beginning with God, and that he was God. I believe



moreover that the Logos doctrine of John is only the necessary complement and explanation of the teaching of the Synoptics that the Christ who is to be the judge of all men, and who is omnipresent with his people, gave his life as a ransom for many and shed his blood for the remission of their sins. In short, I regard the proper deity of Christ as the central truth of Christianity, and the denial of it as logically involving the surrender of the whole Christian doctrine of salvation.

**Willis J. Beecher, M.A., D.D., for many years  
Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature,  
Auburn Theological Seminary.**

I accept without any discount the Trinitarian statement that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. As I set no limits to the true humanity of Jesus, so I set none to his true deity. The difficulties in the case I meet by recognizing the fact that all our formulas in the matter, being finite attempts to express the infinite, are incomplete. I do not see that the formulas which ascribe to our Lord a modified divinity or divineness have any advantage over those which ascribe to him true deity, and the latter certainly follow the Scriptures, and have the advantage of conciseness and positiveness. There is nothing absurd in them for a mind that is in the habit of recognizing the infiniteness of God, and the consequent limitations of human speech concerning him; and for a mind that has not this habit all possible statements of the matter are absurd.

**George Frederick Wright, M.A., D.D., LL.D.,  
F.G.S.A., Professor Emeritus of the Harmony  
of Science and Revelation, Oberlin Theological Seminary.**

I believe the true deity of Christ is clearly taught in the New Testament, and I do not know of any reason why we should not accept the fact as there revealed. Such reasons as are urged against it involve philosophical speculations concerning the ultimate nature of things which are not allowed to have weight in any other realm of fact. I prefer the word "deity" to divinity, because of the loose and

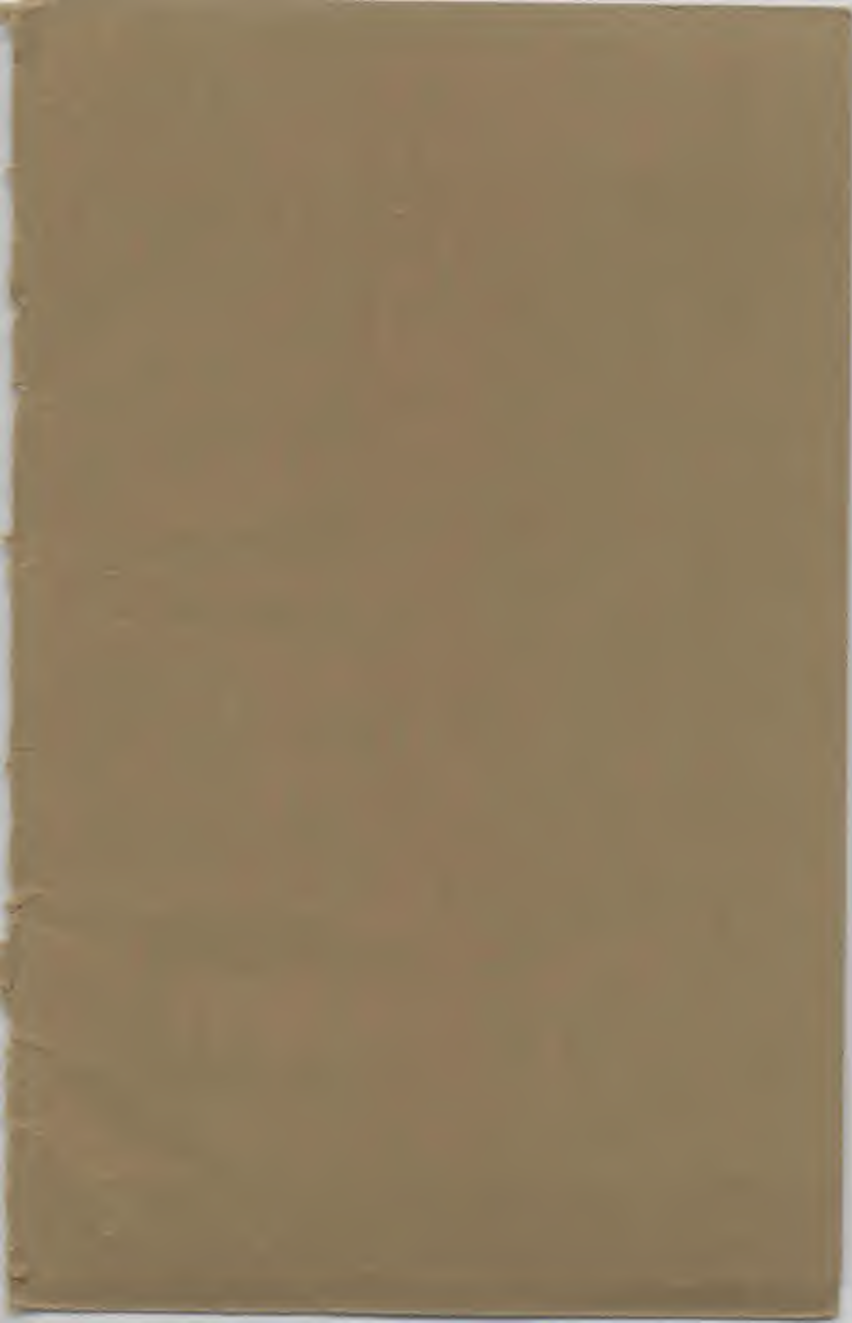
hence ambiguous use which is now made of the latter word. The truth which has ever been the inspiration of the church is that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"; that the "Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God, became flesh and dwelt among us," and that the first disciples "saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God." This fact was confirmed by "signs and wonders and spiritual gifts." We are here dealing with facts and not philosophy. Physical science is dumb regarding the whole matter.

**Professor James Orr, M.A., B.D., D.D., Apologetics and Theology, Theological College of the United Free Church, Glasgow, Scotland.**

I believe in the deity—the God-manhood—of Jesus Christ on grounds of history, of Christ's self-testimony (he only *could* testify of himself, John 8: 14), of his miraculous origin, of his stainless character, divine works, supernatural claims, of the resurrection from the dead, declaring him to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1: 4), of the effects of his exaltation in Pentecost and the work of the Spirit in the church, of the continuous experience of the power and grace of the risen Christ through the ages.

**Professor A. H. Sayce, D.D., LL.D., D.Litt., Assyriology, University of Oxford.**

I do not think I can answer your question better than by quoting the words of the Nicene Creed, which every member of the English Church is required to accept: "I believe . . . in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made." There is no room left here for quibbling as to whether or not the divinity of Christ implies his deity.



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